

Newsletter published by the SHIBA HelpLine Regional Managers, for time-sensitive health insurance news. Please pass the information on to others!

The latest headlines:

CMS to enroll 1.2 million Medicare recipients in Part D by May 1: The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) will send letters this week (printed on green paper) to folks with Supplemental Security Income, to those with Medicare Savings Programs, and to those who applied for and received extra help. The letter will advise recipients of the plan CMS will enroll them in, if the recipients do not enroll themselves before April 30. These recipients may also decline Part D if they wish.

CMS warns about Medicare phone scam: CMS warns seniors and people with disabilities against giving bank account information over the phone to enroll in a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan (Part D). Legitimate Medicare drug plans do not ask for payment over the phone or the Internet. Consumers are encouraged to report these cases to their local law enforcement agencies or by calling 1-877-772-3379.

Part D dual eligibility and copays: If dual-eligible folks (with Medicare and full Medicaid coverage) are receiving an off-formulary drug or a formulary drug from a higher tier, they are responsible for any difference above the standard \$1 - \$5 copay. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) covers up to a maximum of \$5 per prescription. However, if dual-eligible folks find that a pharmacy refuses to bill DSHS for the copay, clients/volunteers can contact DSHS to get help at 1-800-562-3022.

Federal Poverty Level Changes: Effective April 1, 2006, the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) will increase. Review the guidelines at <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/06poverty.shtml> on the Web. Affected programs include Medicare Savings Programs and most of the medical programs through DSHS. Please note that the state's Basic Health plan will not use the new FPL numbers until July 1, 2006.

New Web site educates consumers on Part D: The National Council on the Aging has created a new Web site in English and Spanish to educate consumers about Part D. Visit <http://www.mymedicarematters.org/> for the English language Web site and <http://www.mimedicareimporta.org/> for the Spanish language Web site.

.....
Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors (SHIBA) HelpLine
Washington State Office of the Insurance Commissioner
P.O. Box 40256
Olympia, WA 98504-0256
1-800-562-6900